



Community Group Discussion Guide

March 9, 2025

1 Samuel 25: 1-44 | David and Abigail

MOTIVATE

- ⇒ **Starter Question: List some of the physical, emotional, and spiritual hardships David has faced so far in the wilderness. How do these compare to the hardships Christians face today?**

DISCUSS

1 Samuel 25:1-44 tells the story of a conflict between David and a man named Nabal that escalated toward violence and bloodshed. The placement of this narrative between 1 Samuel 24 and 26 shows how David was transforming from a refugee into God's anointed king. The ability to wait on God and trust Him to act on behalf of His people were crucial characteristics of a successful kingship that reflected His glory. This chapter continues to show the difference between David and Saul, as Saul repeatedly took matters into his own hands, often violently, instead of waiting on God and trusting Him to act.

- ⇒ **How have you seen David grow so far in 1 Samuel? What sticks out to you about his growth?**

1 Samuel 25:1a: Now Samuel died. And all Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him in his house at Ramah.

While the description of Samuel's death is brief, it's important to remember that Samuel played a major role in Saul's kingship. Although Saul ignored Samuel's counsel, Samuel did respect Saul as God's anointed. Samuel also had a major impact on David's life, from anointing him as future king to being a confidant and source of spiritual counsel. David lost an ally at a critical time in his journey toward the throne. Samuel's impact was evident by the entire nation gathering to mourn. His death marked the end of the era of the judges and meant that the nation would be without a spiritual leader until David ascended the throne.

- ⇒ **How did the loss of Samuel and the system of judges contribute to the monarchy of Israel as well as prepare for the Messiah?**

1 Samuel 25:1b-3 Then David rose and went down to the wilderness of Paran. **2** And there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel. The man was very rich; he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. He was shearing his sheep in Carmel. **3** Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. The woman was discerning and beautiful, but the man was harsh and badly behaved; he was a Calebite.

David moved to the northeastern part of the Sinai Peninsula where he encountered a husband and wife, Nabal and Abigail. Nabal means "foolish," or "boorish." Some scholars believe this was either a nickname or that the author of 1 Samuel chose to suppress his identity. It's unlikely an Israelite would choose to name their child something so negative. Whether "foolish" was Nabal's real name or not, it certainly matched his character, described as harsh and badly behaved. The ESV Commentary

states, "In biblical language, a fool is not merely a harmless clown, but a materialistic, self-centered individual who lives a life of practical atheism, violating God's commands."

⇒ **What actions or characteristics does the Bible categorize as foolish?**

1 Samuel 25:4-8 David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. **5** So David sent ten young men. And David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, and go to Nabal and greet him in my name. **6** And thus you shall greet him: 'Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. **7** I hear that you have shearers. Now your shepherds have been with us, and we did them no harm, and they missed nothing all the time they were in Carmel. **8** Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day. Please give whatever you have at hand to your servants and to your son David.'"

Hearing that Nabal was shearing his sheep, David wanted to take care of his men and hoped to appeal to Near Eastern customs and Old Testament laws of hospitality to receive provisions from the man. Sheep shearing season was often accompanied by great feasts, so it's safe to assume Nabal was preparing to host and celebrate alongside his household. The narrator specifically mentions that Nabal was rich, also referring to his large number of livestock. David's men greeted Nabal with a threefold blessing: peace to you, your household, and all that you have. They explained how they had been protecting Nabal's men and flocks, thereby contributing to his success, and hoping to have their contribution acknowledged through a meal or provisions.

⇒ **Does David's request seem reasonable?**

⇒ **What obligation do we have as believers to care for others?**

1 Samuel 15:9-13 When David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David, and then they waited. **10** And Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants these days who are breaking away from their masters. **11** Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers and give it to men who come from I do not know where?" **12** So David's young men turned away and came back and told him all this. **13** And David said to his men, "Every man strap on his sword!" And every man of them strapped on his sword. David also strapped on his sword. And about four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred remained with the baggage.

Nabal contemptuously answered with a rhetorical question along the lines of, "Who does this guy think he is that I should take care of him?" Nabal most likely knew who David was, as his military fame was widespread. Nabal chose to view David and his men as runaways and rebels. Nabal even used the same phrase as Saul and Doeg, "son of Jesse," to belittle David and express that helping David was beneath him. Nabal claimed he made this decision to protect his shearers. However, based on verse 17, it's obvious Nabal was just as harsh to his household. It's safe to assume his refusal was primarily motivated by selfishness.

David was enraged when his men returned empty-handed and explained Nabal's rejection. In response, David gathered the majority of his men and commanded them to strap on their swords to confront Nabal. This quickness to rely upon his own military strength is a different side of David. After all, this is the same David who previously told Goliath, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel" (1 Samuel 17:45). Nabal was much less of a threat to David, Israel, or God, but

David took matters into his own hands. Instead of turning to the Lord, David allowed his anger to guide him to exact revenge.

- ⇒ **With Nabal's rejection, David almost gave into a vengeful spirit. What does a vengeful spirit look like in your life? What steps can you take to avoid giving in to it?**
- ⇒ **Describe a time when anger provoked you to sin. Why does anger lead us to sin more frequently than other feelings?**

1 Samuel 25:14-17 But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to greet our master, and he railed at them. **15** Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm, and we did not miss anything when we were in the fields, as long as we went with them. **16** They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. **17** Now therefore know this and consider what you should do, for harm is determined against our master and against all his house, and he is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him.

Despite David's impetuous response, God providentially created a way out for him. One of Nabal's servants informed Abigail, Nabal's wife, of the issue and warned her of the danger. He confirmed David's claims of protection and reiterated Nabal's wicked character.

- ⇒ **What do Nabal's servant's words reveal about Nabal and Abigail's characters? What insight can you gain from their differences?**

1 Samuel 25:18-22 Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two skins of wine and five sheep already prepared and five seahs of parched grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on donkeys. **19** And she said to her young men, "Go on before me; behold, I come after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. **20** And as she rode on the donkey and came down under cover of the mountain, behold, David and his men came down toward her, and she met them. **21** Now David had said, "Surely in vain have I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him, and he has returned me evil for good. **22** God do so to the enemies of David and more also, if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him."

Abigail, whose name means "discerning" or "good of insight," understood the seriousness of Nabal's response and decided to intervene on behalf of her household. She wasted no time putting her righteous plan into action. She gathered a large gift of food and wine and set out to dissuade David, notably excluding Nabal from this plan. As Abigail raced to meet David, the narrator explains that David's anger had developed into a calculated plan of violence. "God do so to the enemies of David and more" is a word pattern for invoking a curse, which David followed with an oath to slaughter Nabal's household.

- ⇒ **Where do you see yourself in this passage? Are you most like Nabal, who wanted to protect himself first? Or like David, do your feelings lead you to act rashly? Or does Abigail's quickness to do something to fix other's problems seem more like you?**

1 Samuel 25:23-31 When Abigail saw David, she hurried and got down from the donkey and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground. **24** She fell at his feet and said, "On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant. **25** Let not my lord regard this worthless fellow, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. But I your servant did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent. **26** Now then, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, because the LORD has restrained you from bloodguilt and from saving with your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal. **27** And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. **28** Please forgive the trespass of your servant. For the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD, and evil shall not be found in you so long as you live. **29** If men rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the LORD your God. And the lives of your enemies he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling. **30** And when the LORD has done to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning you and has appointed you prince over Israel, **31** my lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause or for my lord working salvation himself. And when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant.

Abigail engaged the future king of Israel with a posture of humility and respect--quite the opposite of Nabal. Abigail called David "my lord" fourteen times and referred to herself as "servant" or "maidservant" six times. She took the blame for the way David had been treated, indicating this situation would have gone differently had she been the one to receive David's men initially. The phrase "speak in your ears" means she was asking to say things she would not normally say in public.

Abigail bravely and tactfully explained that she recognized Nabal's disrespect. She apologized, speaking in a way that was uncommon, and potentially dangerous, for women in the ancient Near East. Seeing that David was allowing her to speak plainly, she continued with three arguments to convince him not to kill Nabal and his household:

1. She suggested that God had sent her to stop David from bloodguilt and taking matters into his own hands, which would keep him from committing a dreadful sin before the Lord (Exodus 22:2-3).
2. She proclaimed a curse on David's enemies, anticipating that the Lord would deal with anyone who opposed him and acted with folly like Nabal did.
3. She urged David to receive her present and respond to Nabal's offenses in a way that honored the Lord.

Along with the gift of food and wine she proclaimed a blessing over David: God would give him a lasting dynasty and he would fulfill his divine calling to fight the battles of the Lord--but only if he was found righteous. She proclaimed that God would protect David from evil men, such as Saul and Nabal, and defeat his enemies.

The "bundle of the living" Abigail spoke of in verse 29 could symbolize two items: the "book of the living" as seen in Psalm 69:28, or a bag that shepherds carried, usually filled with pebbles, to keep track of their sheep. Either way, Abigail was inferring that God held David in His hands and would sustain him. She also proclaimed that God would "sling out" David's enemies, maybe calling back to memory how the Lord allowed David to defeat Goliath with only a rock and slingshot. She then

summarized David's time in the wilderness by saying that God had promised to make him prince (Hebrew nagid, "leader"), but he needed to depend on the Lord rather than taking matters into his own hands. Through all of her words, Abigail made it clear there was no need for personal revenge against Nabal.

- ⇒ **Discuss the differences between Abigail and Nabal's attitudes toward David.**
- ⇒ **Which part of Abigail's defense sticks out to you and why? What do you learn from her approach?**

1 Samuel 25:32-35 And David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! **33** Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from working salvation with my own hand! **34** For as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male." **35** Then David received from her hand what she had brought him. And he said to her, "Go up in peace to your house. See, I have obeyed your voice, and I have granted your petition."

Abigail's God-given discretion penetrated David's heart. He accepted Abigail's gifts and granted her petition. He abandoned his violent venture, blessed Abigail for her wise words, and thanked God for His intervention. David withdrew his oath made in verse 22 and instead vowed to show restraint. It's a mark of David's humility and teachability that he accepted this course correction and chose to uphold his role as the anointed king through desperately depending on God and anchoring to His promises.

- ⇒ **Have you ever been intent on sinning, but God provided a way out of the temptation? Describe the event and your response.**
- ⇒ **When confronted with sin, are you more prone to respond in repentance or to double down? What drives your response?**

1 Samuel 25:36-38 And Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk. So she told him nothing at all until the morning light. **37** In the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. **38** And about ten days later the LORD struck Nabal, and he died.

When Abigail returned, Nabal had already moved on from this encounter with David and started his party. The word used for "feast" here has the connotations of drinking liberally, and the "feast of a king" shows just how rich and gluttonous Nabal really was. Abigail waited until the next day when Nabal was sober to tell him what she had done. The news was so shocking to Nabal that he was paralyzed, likely through a heart attack or stroke. He succumbed to this divine judgement ten days later and died.

- ⇒ **Why is it important for us to see that God in His wisdom and justice was the one who handled this situation?**

1 Samuel 25:39-42 When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the LORD who has avenged the insult I received at the hand of Nabal, and has kept back his servant from wrongdoing. The LORD has returned the evil of Nabal on his own head." Then David sent and spoke

to Abigail, to take her as his wife. **40** When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, "David has sent us to you to take you to him as his wife." **41** And she rose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, "Behold, your handmaid is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." **42** And Abigail hurried and rose and mounted a donkey, and her five young women attended her. She followed the messengers of David and became his wife.

When David heard of Nabal's death, he thanked God for keeping him from wrongdoing and for showing divine justice. David recognized Abigail's strengths and sent his men to request her as a wife. Abigail again responded with humility and haste, demonstrating a willingness to wash their feet and leaving immediately to become David's wife.

- ⇒ **How did God respond to David relenting of his oath to kill Nabal and his household?**
- ⇒ **If we don't see immediate justice on behalf of God's people, how can we remain hopeful?**
- ⇒ **What makes Abigail such an admirable Old Testament character?**

1 Samuel 25:43-44: 43 David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and both of them became his wives. **44** Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was of Gallim.

David also married Ahinoam of Jezreel, who became the mother of David's eldest son, Ammon (2 Samuel 3:2). To deprive David of his son-in-law status, Saul had taken Michal (David's first wife) away after she helped David escape in 1 Samuel 19. Though polygamy is contrary to the way God created marriage in the beginning, it was socially acceptable at the time. David could have taken multiple wives as a political move, to gain connections to various parts of Israel, or it could have been a matter of giving into his heart's desires. While David was well on his way to the throne of Israel, he was still not a perfect king.

- ⇒ **Discuss this quote by Sam Emadi from *Desiring God: The Bible doesn't offer an ethical code through isolated stories of individual exemplars. Instead, it provides a comprehensive story that establishes God's purposes for humanity in creation, how humanity has rebelled against those norms, and how Christ restores humanity and, by His Spirit, reanimates the redeemed to obey God's law.***
- ⇒ **How do David's imperfections point us to Jesus?**

TRANSFORM

1. Make personal application: David was an imperfect man, learning how to follow God with a calling unlike anyone else's. God used David's time in the wilderness to shape him into "a man after His own heart," a man fit to be the ideal king of Israel. David was tempted to run, lie, cheat, and even kill during the adversity he faced, but God expected David to choose righteousness in the face of suffering. David was learning that restraint and trusting God to act would guide the way to the best path. David had many faults, but he never failed to repent when he was confronted with his sin.

- ⇒ **How have adversity and temptation built your godly character? How have these increased your dependence on God?**
- ⇒ **Is it hard to accept that suffering and temptation will always be a part of our lives? How can you begin to see this as a blessing instead of a curse?**
- ⇒ **Why is it tempting to justify our sin in the midst of suffering? Why is suffering not an excuse for disobedience?**

⇒ **How can you practically love your enemies this week?**

2. Pray: Thank God for those times you know He has kept you from sinning in your anger. Praise Him for always being a Just Judge. Ask Him to help you to learn to control your temper and your need for revenge.

STUDY

Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- English Standard Version Study Bible (2008), pg 598-600.
- ESV Expository Commentary: 1 Samuel-2 Chronicles (2019), pg 243-251.
- Holman Old Testament Commentary I & II Samuel (2009), pg 167-170, 173, 178.
- NIV Application Commentary I & II Samuel (2021), pg 341-348.
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/why-did-god-allow-polygamy>, accessed 2/14/25.